

went away to church camp. I excelled in drama, journalism and forensics. These are the things that kept me from drowning myself in drugs or alcohol. These people and activities kept me from killing myself that one awful night when I was 16 and I had reached the end of my rope. These people and activities gave me the courage to pack a bag and leave home at 17, two weeks before I was ready to start my first semester at the university my mother insisted I could not go to, even though I had a scholarship and grants that completely paid my way. If it hadn't been for that village . . .

Now, many years since Naomi's death and many miles from that home that was not a home, I count on the village as a parent. When my children were little, the village taught me simple things that I had not learned at home; how to breast feed, how to change diapers, how to teach my children to read, how to discipline without violence. As my children have become teenagers and I have become a single parent, the village has become even more critical to my family's health and well-being. There are those loving adults at our church who adore my children, give them new experiences and constant encouragement. There are those caring adults at their school who challenge them to stretch their imaginations and use their intellect. There are those adults in our neighborhood who wave and smile and provide a watchful eye of protection. As a single, custodial parent of children whose father is 3,000 miles away and rarely sees them, I count on the men in the village to provide examples to my son and daughter of what dedicated, responsible men look like.

I know firsthand that not every parent is wise, all-knowing and caretaking. Sometimes it is because they did not receive those things themselves as children; sometimes it is because they are hopelessly lost in their own egos.

Making fun of a promising and true statement, that it does indeed "take a village to raise a child," does not change bad parents into good ones, it only furthers political games at the expense of children. Writing into law that a parent's "rights" are absolute and inalienable (and thereby overturning almost 2,000 state child abuse statutes), will not strengthen families but lead to despair for the most vulnerable members of those families.

The village saved my life.●

A CALL TO TONE DOWN THE VIOLENCE

● Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, during our recess Joan Beck, an editorial writer for the Chicago Tribune who also does a column for the Tribune, had a column in which she calls on TV and movie executives to reduce the violence.

It is a subject that I have spent a fair amount of time on, and it is important to creating a more stable society and a brighter future for our children.

This is an area where bi-partisanship should mark our actions. I applaud both Bob Dole and Bill Clinton for being concerned here.

Mr. President, I ask that the article from The Chicago Tribune be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

A CALL TO TONE DOWN THE VIOLENCE
(By Joan Beck)

Bob Dole's latest efforts to persuade Hollywood to tone down the amount of violence in

the movies got two thumbs down from most of his critics. They ridiculed his taste in films. They fretted about censorship. And they give him only pro forma applause before ignoring what he was saying.

Bill Clinton last week got TV broadcasters to agree to air a minimum of three hours of educational television for children every week. But his critics carped about government over-regulation. They argued about how to define "educational." And they bristled about TV executives being used to further Clinton's re-election campaign.

But both the president and his Republican challenger are right about the dangers of exposing impressionable children to so much violence on TV and in the movies. The points they are making shouldn't be ignored.

Crime statistics may be down slightly in a few urban areas. But bombings, bomb threats and bomb scares are increasing. Drive-by shootings are being committed by kids on bicycles to young to have cars. One in every three black men in their 20s are either in prison or on probation or parole—up from one in four five years ago. Many urban parks and streets are abandoned at night because people fear for their lives.

Violent behavior has multiple—and interlocking—causes, of course. They include poverty, hopelessness, abuse, poor parenting, illegal drugs, mental illness, alcohol, racism, distorted values, gangs, the absence of violence in movies and TV.

Of these, the easiest and quickest to change may be television and movies.

Adults who enjoy violence as entertainment and the media executives who profit from it argue there is no convincing evidence to link violence in mass media to violence in real life. Like tobacco company honchos, they dismiss stacks of studies showing they are wrong.

But at the same time they claim TV does not promote violent behavior, media executives assure advertisers that commercials will influence millions of viewers. Their marketing departments have piles of research to back them up.

It is tricky to pinpoint how big an effect violence on TV and in the movies has on children and young people. Excessive exposure to filmed violence in childhood may not erupt into homicide and crime until adolescence. Other factors certainly make some children more vulnerable than others to media influences.

But the June issue of the Harvard Mental Health Letter sums up persuasive evidence that does link watching violence in mass media and aggressive behavior. The report is written by L. Rowell Huesmann, professor of psychology and communication, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and Jessica Moise, a doctoral student at the University of Michigan.

More than 100 laboratory studies done over the last 40 years show that at least some children exposed to films of dramatic violence act more aggressively afterward toward inanimate objects and other youngsters, the newsletter says. It adds, "These results have been found in many countries among boys and girls of all social classes, races, ages and levels of intelligence."

In addition, more than 50 field studies made over the last 20 years find that "children who habitually watch more media violence behave more aggressively and accept aggression more readily as a way to solve problems." The connection shows up regardless of age, sex, social class and previous level of aggression, the author says.

Watching violence in the media leads to aggressive behavior in five ways, the Harvard newsletter says. First, children may imitate characters they see in the media, especially if they are admirable and their ac-

tions are rewarded. Then they tend to internalize the behavior and use it automatically in their everyday lives.

Second, violence in the media desensitizes children to the effects of violence. "The more televised violence a child watches, the more acceptable aggressive behavior becomes," says the newsletter. It also makes children expect others to act violently and therefore feel they should, too.

Third, seeing violence in the media helps a child justify to himself his own acts of aggression and relieves any guilt he might feel, freeing him to continue to behave aggressively.

Fourth, watching violent acts on TV and in movies may activate aggressive thoughts and feelings a child already has or serve as a cognitive cue for later violent behavior. And fifth, children who watch a lot of violence can become desensitized to it and the emotional and physiological responses that might turn them away from it become dulled.

"The studies are conclusive," says the Harvard newsletter. "The evidence leaves no room for doubt that exposure to media violence stimulates aggression."

The new V chip that lets parents cut off their children's access to violent programs should help. More high quality, "educational" shows for children on TV is a positive move. And all of us who fear violence and regret the changes we are making to protect ourselves—airline security checks, gated communities, more police, more prisons, more restrictions on ourselves about walking in the parks and on certain streets—can stop supporting violence as entertainment.

We can cut violence on TV and in movies out of our lives and help make it unprofitable for those who sell it. If enough of us refuse to pay to see violent films, studios will make fewer of them. If enough of us change the channel when a violent TV show comes on, broadcasters will get the message.

Cutting back on violence as entertainment won't solve the problem of violence in the real world. But it should help. It's something we can do now, while we try to figure out how to end poverty and keep fathers in the home and create more effective schools and end drug abuse and deal with all the other factors that contribute to violent crime.●

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the President pro tempore of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort His Excellency, John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland, into the House Chamber for the joint meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 1996.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1996

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House on S. 640.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH) laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives: